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ANNUAL REPORT OF
PORTLAND CITY MANAGER

1951

Annual Report to Portland City Council
on MUNICIPAL ACTIVITIES FOR 1951
By Lyman S. Moore, City Manager
February 15, 1952

The march of City Government events in 1951 was steady, complex, and fruitful.

COUNCIL POLICIES

A city council's work is always demanding and never finished, but in 1951 the Portland City Council was harder put than in most years to keep pace with the major problems of the city.

The Council's annual job of appropriating funds to finance the budget was complicated by the necessity of reviewing the budget in detail in the light of the national emergency declared by the President just before the year started.

Two large projects--the East Side Sewer and the Longfellow School--estimated to cost \$1,300,000--raised important questions of policy. The Council decided to approve the manager's recommendation that competitive bidding for city work be wide open regardless of residence, and the East Side sewer contract was let to a Massachusetts firm at a substantial saving. The two projects required the sale of \$1,250,000 of bonds at the advantageous rate of 1.6%.

The complex question of policy as to the future role in the community of City Hospital caused the Council to appoint a citizens' committee to review the whole problem, and the committee was still hard at work at the year-end.

A complete review of pay scales paid by private employers in Portland led the Council to adopt new scales for city employees in June at an annual cost of \$200,000. Maximum salaries for teachers were raised in September, and the Council decided to start equalizing the salaries of men and women teachers in three steps to meet the requirement of a new statute that such salaries be equalized by January 1, 1954.

A legislative year is always a busy one. The most important results for Portland of legislative action were the retirement of the State from the property tax which cost real estate taxpayers in Portland almost \$700,000; the defeat of bills designed to undo approval by the people of the new Fore River bridge; and approval of an act enabling the city government to embark on a pioneering program of reclaiming blighted areas. The redevelopment act was approved by a heavy majority of Portland voters at a December referendum.

Revaluation of all real estate in Portland was completed in the summer and was the last step in the Council's fulfillment of the major recommendations made by its Citizens' Tax Committee in 1948. The revaluation required Council adoption of an assessment ratio for real estate which was fixed at 60 per cent. More than 1200 taxpayer appeals were heard by the Assessors in the fall, and the Council was convinced by the end of the year that the Assessors themselves still had a job to do to perfect the new system.

The Council reviewed its long-term financial and capital improvement policy in the summer, reaffirmed its intent to provide \$300,000 annually from tax revenues for major improvements, and announced plans for two \$1,000,000 bond issues in 1954 and 1956 in order to keep pace with capital improvement needs without changing materially our annual tax requirements for principal and interest on the debt. The Council also set aside \$100,000 from 1951 revenues in anticipation of \$750,000 of Portland High School bonds falling due in 1952.

Council work through the year brought enactment in November of a new housing code intended to improve the quality of existing housing throughout the City.

Parking problems occupied the Council at various times. Completion of the off-street parking committee's report confronted the Council with a recommended investment of several hundred thousand dollars intended to be self-liquidating. The Council sold the Garvin School property on Casco Street for a private parking lot and leased a city property at Elm and Cumberland Avenue for the same purpose. A lot at Myrtle and Cumberland Avenue was bought to get city-owned cars off the street. And, finally, a backlog of unpaid parking tags led to a more rigid enforcement policy.

In the midst of this busy year, Council and employees met with citizens in three very helpful neighborhood town meetings in Oakdale, East Deering, and Munjoy Hill.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

These also represent work and decisions by the Council, but they affect the future of the City sufficiently to justify separate treatment.

The two major projects have been mentioned. The half-a-million dollar rebuilding of the East Side Sewer is the basis for modern drainage in most of North Deering--the City's most rapidly growing residential area. The \$750,000 Longfellow School replaces three obsolete schools and is the second major step in the city's program of school construction.

But there were other important projects. Car rails were removed from Washington Avenue between Johanssen and Ocean Avenue, and the entire street rebuilt. Car rails were covered on outer Woodford Street. A chlorinator to reduce the Back Bay nuisance from the big almshouse sewer was financed. The Ivy Street intercepting sewer and its laterals were completed. New sewer construction was authorized on Dorset Street and Holm Avenue beyond Nason's Corner. A site for the new North Deering School was acquired and another for the Walton Street school and play area was authorized. A major improvement of Bayside playground was started. And a basic engineering study of the West Side sewer shed was made which will be the basis of future sewer planning in the whole west side of Deering.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

This was a productive year for industrial development in Portland, stimulated by the availability of city-owned land. The Saco-Moc shoe factory at Bayside Park was finished and the \$1,000,000 Quincy Market warehouse at Rocky Hill started. The Council renewed its financial participation with the Port Authority and South Portland in a program of port promotion which was bringing frequent shipments of grain, sisal, and rubber by fall.

ORGANIZATION

At the beginning of the year the work of the Clerk and Auditor was separated at a small financial saving. The Health Department was strengthened by the employment of a trained sanitary engineer, and the Public Works Department was authorized to employ a traffic engineer. The administration of Public Works operations was reorganized under a single head in accordance with a public works survey report which produced annual savings of \$40,000. Several recommendations of the public welfare report completed in 1950 were carried out. Finally, an assistant to the treasurer was appointed late in the year to succeed the City Treasurer when he retires next July after 37 years of service.

DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITIES

Detailed reports from each department are on file. Only the highlights will be reported here.

General Government

The City Clerk reports another busy year with receipts from fees, exclusive of business licenses, practically paying for the cost of operation. Resident births and marriages are down from 1950, which may affect future requirements for school space.

The Treasurer's total tax collections, current and delinquent, were almost 100 per cent of the 1951 tax commitment and only 2.3% of 1951 taxes were unpaid at December 31. Excise tax collections were a record high of \$338,300 for 26,700 vehicles. Average interest on temporary loans was 1.09 per cent, while the effective interest rate on \$1,250,000 of permanent improvement bonds was 1.52 per cent. We secured early in the year the highest credit rating for our securities that is available from the three standard rating agencies. Parking meter collections were \$3,000 higher than 1950.

The volume of purchase orders--11,785--was almost precisely the same in 1951 and 1950, but the dollar amount in 1951 was \$122,900 less. By discontinuing the use of high octane gas \$3,000 was saved. Cash bonds to guarantee delivery of new vehicles has saved more than \$1,000 of repairs. Small savings have been made in insurance costs.

The planning staff worked on many phases of the master plan--Fore River Bridge, population forecasts, airport location, East Deering expressway, and school population. A development plan for North Deering was completed and

discussed with landowners. Four redevelopment areas totalling 195 acres were studied in detail. Five subdivisions were approved.

Public Safety

Fire loss of \$51,200 was the lowest since 1895, the number of fire calls was 25 per cent less than 1950, and there were only six second alarms. Sixteen thousand two hundred fire prevention inspections were made. Two tank trucks were built--one for Portland and one for Cliff Island--and Rosemont Fire Station was opened as Engine #3. Over 4,000 feet of cable was installed in the fire alarm system, and an air raid warning system was set up.

Arrests for major(Class 1) crimes were even with 1950, but for Class 2 crimes were down 13 per cent. Stolen property was \$46,500 less than 1950, and the 80 per cent recovery in Portland was substantially better than the national average of 62 per cent. Injury accidents were 13 per cent less and property damage accidents 5 per cent higher. The pedestrian ordinance proved itself by reducing pedestrian accidents 30 per cent. Revenue from traffic tags increased 17 per cent. The Portland Police department played an important part in the successful investigation of gambling activities in Cumberland County. Responsibility for parking meter maintenance was transferred from the Fire Department to the Police Department.

The number of building permits--2,666--was 3 per cent higher than 1950, but the dollar volume was 32 per cent less than the all-time record of 5½ million dollars in 1950. Both the number and dollar volume were substantially above the average of the past 10 years. Zoning and building code appeals were 13 per cent less than 1950. The Advisory Board on Smoke Control continued to secure substantial and gratifying results in smoke abatement by voluntary action. The so-called "worst offenders" were reduced from 13 to 6, and these six were "caught" by observation only 44 times in the last quarter of 1951 against 94 times in the same period of 1950. This is an example of citizen-government cooperation at its best, and there is not an iota of regulation in it.

Public Buildings

Normal use and routine maintenance characterized City Hall use by the public in 1951. A new ten cent fee for adult use of the public baths caused a decrease of about eight per cent in their use.

Public Health

New staff for sanitary engineering and housing inspection has strengthened the department. The immunization program in schools and clinics has been improved, and "3-in-1" injections for whooping cough, diphtheria, and tetanus are now used. A food handlers school for employees of local restaurants was held. An appraisal of public health in Portland as a means of evaluating health services and measuring health problems was started with the help of the Council of Social Agencies.

Public Works

Much of the capital improvement work described above was a Public Works responsibility. Less important construction included street work in Smith Street, Albion Street, Hobart Street, Craigie Street, Belfort Street, Grafton Street, and Russell Street; sewers in Capisic Street, June Street, and Smith Street; and surface water drains in Vernon Street and Westbrook Street.

About 500,000 square yards of sealcoating on residential streets was completed as planned. Economies in operation have held street maintenance dollar costs about even for five years despite increased salaries, more work accomplished, and better results in riding surfaces.

Delayed deliveries of brick and curb reduced new sidewalks to 4,900 feet from the 6,000 feet planned.

Three new medium and three new light trucks were purchased.

A new pontoon for Portland Pier was built and installed at a cost of \$9,500. A new water line to the East End dump enabled us to convert from a burning dump and eliminate the serious smoke nuisance.

Forty-five new street lights were installed.

Public Welfare

We enjoyed a striking reduction in relief load and costs in 1951--with a monthly average of 245 families on relief against 362 in 1950. This was offset in part by an increase in load and costs of the Aid to Dependent Children program --a Federal-state-local program where we share costs, but have no part in control. The ADC load went from 706 children in 1950 to 866 in 1951. Pressure on City Hospital facilities remained constant, with an average of 151 patients against 133 in 1950. Residents in the home, however, numbered only 138, against 171 in 1950.

The Council will be glad to know that major recommendations of the Lansdale study have been carried out. The Child Welfare division has been abolished; we receive substantial benefits from state hospital aid; and new personnel, replacing employees who have resigned, is well trained. With the adoption of the 1952 budget, we will provide relief in cash for those families who prove their ability to use it wisely.

Parks and Recreation

The Lee Center, East End Bench, and summer playgrounds were all used more intensively in 1951 than in 1950. Much of the recreation equipment, such as sand boxes, shelters, benches, and picnic tables, was completely overhauled.

More than 25,000 public trees were cared for, with 70 removed because of hazard or damage to property.

The most easterly section of Baxter Boulevard was sealcoated.

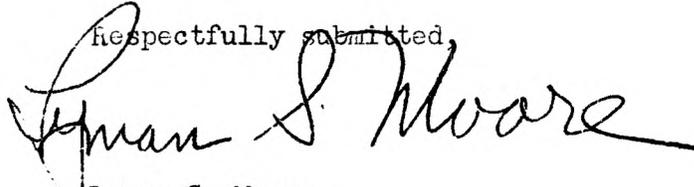
Forest City Cemetery and Riverside Golf Course were both self-sustaining, with the golf course improvement account now built up to \$4,500. Burials at Forest City Cemetery were up 9 per cent. Poor weather, rather than the new fee schedule, reduced golf course use somewhat.

In the park system itself 383 acres were maintained, with such high spots as 15,000 plants in 65 flower beds, planting of 25,000 tulips, and display of 800 roses in 125 varieties at the Oaks.

CONCLUSION

The combination of factors--revaluation, redevelopment, large-scale construction, salary revision, and a legislative session--which made 1951 a particularly rugged year for Council and employees--is not likely to be repeated soon. It was a year of substantial progress, and in the year ahead we can expect to consolidate and build on many of our gains. I am deeply indebted to the City Council for providing the forward-looking leadership which enables us to work, and to city employees, without whose loyalty and ability none of the end results would be possible.

Respectfully submitted,



Lyman S. Moore

